

# CHAPTER 2

## HOUSING ELEMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Housing Element is to identify the need for, and mechanisms that will lead to, the construction and preservation of decent housing for all economic segments of the Clark County population.

Region-wide in orientation, the Housing Element addresses all of Clark County. It sets policy direction for lands under county government jurisdiction, is coordinated to the greatest extent possible with housing policies developed by cities and towns and provides practical implementation guidance. The need for mechanisms to insure a variety of housing prices and neighborhood designs is discussed, as well as the types of housing that should be available in the future.

### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ELEMENTS AND PLANS

The Housing Element of the 20-Year Plan builds upon principles and policies established in earlier county comprehensive plans. Earlier plans discussed housing primarily in light of its land use implications. This plan addresses housing in broader terms, reaching beyond land use patterns and densities to discuss issues such as affordability, special needs and community character.

The Housing Element also builds upon principles and policy direction provided by the County-wide Planning Policies and the Community Framework Plan. These policies, developed through an extensive public participation process are intended to provide long-term, overall guidance for Clark County and its cities in developing the Housing Element for the 20-Year Plan.

#### **Clark County/City of Vancouver Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan**

The Housing Element of the 20-Year Plan has a relationship to the Clark County/City of Vancouver Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan (HCD). Each jurisdiction that receives assistance from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is required to prepare a plan that addresses the needs for low-income people. Clark County and the City of Vancouver prepare a five-year plan and are currently in the process of creating a new plan for 2005-2010. The Housing and Community Development plan is designed to:

- provide an assessment of housing and community development needs in Clark County,
- identify resources and key players,
- develop strategies and goals to ensure affordable housing and decent living environments for person who earn 80-percent or less of the area's median income (\$50,300 for a family of four – HUD 2004 data), including homeowners, renters,

the elderly, families, people with special housing needs and people who are homeless,

- develop strategies and goals to ensure support for programs and facilities that promote viable communities and address community development, infrastructure, and human service needs of urban and rural areas, and
- report the annual use of HUD entitlement funds.

The Housing Element uses many of the statistics and needs assessments prepared in the HCD. Implementation of the policies in the Housing Element through ordinances and programs will assist in meeting needs identified in the HCD.

Special needs populations such as people who are homeless, people at risk for homelessness, the frail/elderly, single parents, physically disabled, victims of domestic abuse, veterans, chronically mentally ill, developmentally disabled, migrant farm workers, and persons living with HIV/AIDS or chemical addictions are addressed in both the Housing Element and the HCD.

Housing affordability is a key component within the Growth Management legislation. Housing affordability will be affected by policies adopted in the other elements including transportation, public facilities, utilities, open space and recreation, land use, and (for the county only) rural lands. Likewise, the pattern and density of housing development will affect the cost to the county; to local utilities to extend services such as water lines, sewer lines, transit service, fire protection, etc.; and, ultimately, to the businesses and residents of Clark County in user fees and taxes.

Updates of the county zoning ordinance, land division ordinance, Transportation Impact Fee (TIF) and Parks Impact Fee (PIF) ordinances, and new ordinances and programs created as a result of this planning process, will implement the goals and policies established in the Housing Element. These land use and development ordinances are prepared by the respective municipal jurisdictions and should be reviewed for compatibility with the plan.

## **HOUSING ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

The Growth Management Act of 1990 (GMA), as amended, requires that 20-Year Comprehensive Plans have a housing element that:

- Recognizes the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods;
- Includes an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs;
- Includes a statement of goals, policies, and objectives for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing;
- Identifies sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to, government assisted housing, housing for low income families, manufactured housing, multi-family housing, and group homes and foster care facilities; and
- Makes adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.

The Procedural Criteria for Adopting Comprehensive Plans and Development Regulations for the Act further specifies that the Housing Element of the 20-Year Plan (WAC 365-195-310) shall, at a minimum, contain:

- An inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs;

- A statement of the goals, policies and objectives for the improvement, preservation, and development of housing;
- Identification of sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to, government assisted housing, housing for low income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, and group homes and foster care facilities; and
- Adequate provision for existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community.

The Act and its Procedural Criteria provide the legislative framework for preparation of the Housing Element.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE ELEMENT**

The Housing Element consists of three sections: The Background and Existing Conditions section including statistics supporting the county's housing element. It summarizes existing conditions and information in Clark County and focuses on inventory data, which support the policy orientation on growth management. The Goals and Policies section, on an issue by issue basis, presents a comprehensive set of goals and policies to guide the implementation of the plan. The Strategy section consists of a set of planning strategies related to housing in Clark County. See HCD for additional information on county housing issues.

## **BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The housing needs of Clark County are determined by the characteristics of its existing and projected population (age, household size, income, special needs, etc.), when compared to the characteristics of the existing and expected housing supply (size, cost, condition, etc.). Clark County is expected to add approximately 163,728 people or 54,779 households over the next twenty years. The issue facing local governments is where to direct this growth given environmental constraints and the cost of providing public services, and how to ensure that a range of housing types and prices are available.

Much of the data contained in this section comes from the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the 1980, and 1990, and 2000 census and the HCD prepared by Clark County Department of Community Services. The HCD is required under the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990. All jurisdictions eligible for funding under this act, and wishing to participate in the program, are required to prepare a plan identifying the different types of housing needed in the community and setting priorities for addressing them.

### **Population**

Table 2.1 shows the population trends of the cities and unincorporated areas of Clark County from 1980 to 2000. There has been a significant increase in the overall population of the county in the last two decades. Clark County had a total increase of 80 percent in population since 1980 with a 45 percent increase since 1990.

**Table 2.1 Population Trends in Clark County, 1980-2003**

Area	1980	1990	2000	2003
Clark County	192,227	238,053	345,238	372,300
Unincorporated	134,978	173,844	166,305	179,825
Incorporated	57,248	64,209	178,933	192,475
Battle Ground	2,774	3,758	9,322	12,560
Camas	5,681	6,798	12,534	14,200
La Center	439	483	1,654	1,855
Ridgefield	1,062	1,332	2,147	2,185
Vancouver	42,834	46,380	143,560	150,700
Washougal	3,834	4,764	8,595	9,775
Woodland*	-	94	92	85
Yacolt	544	600	1,055	1,115

Sources: OFM Forecasting, State of Washington web site, November 2003.

Notes: \* The portion of the City of Woodland population that resides in Clark County.

This growth has occurred in both unincorporated areas and in cities. The unincorporated areas had a 23 percent increase in population since 1980 and a 4.4 percent decrease between 1990 and 2000. This negative increase is in large part due to a large annexation of previously developed unincorporated Clark County into Vancouver in 1997. Incorporated areas of the county grew substantially in the past twenty years 213 percent since 1980 and 179 percent since 1990. The slowest growth in the county's municipalities was in Ridgefield, with a still substantial growth rate of 61% since 1990. By 2023, the county anticipates a population increase of 163,728 or a 49 percent increase over the 2000 end of year count of 351,211 with a total population of 534,191.

## Age

Table 2.2 shows the changes in the distribution of the age of the county's population since 1980. The data show the largest population group for 2000 are children aged 0-19 (108,037). Persons aged 20-39 were the next largest group (97,649) followed closely by persons aged 40 - 59 (95,130). Clark County's population continues to be family households with children. Housing policy should make efforts to address the needs of this significant population.

**Table 2.2 Age Distribution of Clark County Residents, 1980-2000**

AGE	1980	1990	2000	% CHANGE 1990-2000	% CHANGE 1980-1990
0-19	66,882	74,164	108,037	46%	9%
20-39	65,473	75,080	97,649	30%	12%
40-59	35,079	54,623	95,130	74%	35%
60-85+	24,793	34,186	44,422	30%	27%
TOTAL	192,227	238,053	345,238	45%	19%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; Office of Program Planning and Fiscal Management, Corrected 1990 Population by County by 5-Year Age Groups, State of Washington. April, 2000.

Comparing percentage change data provides insight into future growth trends. The growth for persons aged 20-39 slowed, however, from 1990 - 2000, possibly due to the increase in housing prices during that time. Young adults may find themselves increasingly pushed out of Clark County's market, compared to persons aged 40 - 59 who may have more financial ability to pay for housing.

## Race and Ethnicity

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the total minority population represents 11 percent (38,590) of the county's population, up from 7 percent in 1990. The HCD contains information on special populations and their housing needs in 2000. It reviewed the percentage of minority persons in each census tract and found no concentrations of minority persons in any one area of the county. In recent years, there has been an influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia into Clark County. These new residents, while not racial minorities, are a distinct ethnic community. Their housing needs are being met by the private market, although they may require assistance adjusting to their new communities. Table 2.3 shows the distribution of population by race in Clark County in 1990 and 2000. From 1990 to 2000 the Hispanic population in Clark County also substantially increased from 1.5 percent (3,640) to 4.7 percent (16,248).

**Table 2.3 Clark County Population by Race and Ethnicity**

RACE AND ETHNICITY	TOTAL PERSONS 1990	% OF COUNTY POPULATION 1990	TOTAL PERSONS 2000	% OF COUNTY POPULATION 2000
WHITE	221,552	93%	306,648	89%
BLACK	2,976	1.3%	5,813	1.7%
NATIVE AMERICAN	2,296	1.0%	2,910	0.8%
ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	5,670	2.4%	12,369	3.6%
TWO OR MORE RACES	N/A	N/A	10,641	3.1%
HISPANIC	3,640	1.5%	16,248	4.7%
OTHER RACE	1,919	.8%	6,857	2%
TOTAL	238,053	100%	345,238	100%

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.*

## Households

A household is all of the people living in one housing unit, whether or not they are related. A single person renting an apartment is a household, just as is a family living in a single-family house. The number and type of households in a community can indicate the housing needs of that community. Table 2.4 gives historic information on the numbers of households in Clark County and each of its cities. As is the case with population, most of the household growth has occurred in incorporated communities over the past 20 years.

**Table 2.4 Number of Households in Clark County, 1980-2000**

JURISDICTION/AREA	1980	1990	2000	CHANGE 1990-2000	CHANGE 1980-1990
<b>TOTAL CLARK COUNTY</b>	68,750	88,571	127,208	+38,637	+19,821
<b>TOTAL INCORPORATED CLARK COUNTY</b>	24,248	26,630	69,129	+42,499	+2,382
<b>TOTAL UNINCORPORATED CLARK COUNTY</b>	44,502	61,941	58,079	-3,862	+17,439
<b>BATTLE GROUND</b>	972	1,341	3,071	+1,730	+369
<b>CAMAS</b>	2,096	2,438	4,480	+2,042	+342
<b>LA CENTER</b>	156	129	552	+423	-27
<b>RIDGEFIELD</b>	382	441	739	+298	+59
<b>VANCOUVER</b>	18,844	20,135	56,638	+36,493	+1,291
<b>WASHOUGAL</b>	1,544	1,898	3,294	+1,396	+354
<b>WOODLAND (PART)</b>	49	49	46	-3	0
<b>YACOLT</b>	205	199	319	+120	-6

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

The county's growth patterns will change as a result of adopting this plan to implement the GMA. Household growth, like population growth, will be directed to cities or urban growth areas, which will eventually be annexed to cities. If growth patterns in the future are similar to those of the past, households in rural areas will be larger on average than those in urban areas, by approximately 10 percent. Table 2.5 shows the county's household growth patterns since 1980.

**Table 2.5 Household Characteristics in Clark County, 1980-2023**

YEAR	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD	SENIOR HOUSEHOLDS	NON-SENIOR HOUSEHOLDS
<b>1980</b>	68,750	2.76	11,086	57,664
<b>1990</b>	88,571	2.66	15,243	73,328
<b>2000</b>	127,208	2.69	23,131	104,077
<b>2023</b>	198,584	2.69	84,597*	113,987*

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and Washington Office of Financial Management.

\*2023 projected age distribution is based on OFM population projections and Clark County estimates.

## Income

The relationship of household income to housing prices is the main factor affecting the ability of Clark County's residents to secure adequate housing. Table 2.6 compares median household incomes for Clark County and each of the cities. Median income is defined as the mid-point of all of the reported incomes; that is, half the households had higher incomes and half the households had lower incomes than the mid-point, with the county median household income very similar to the statewide average.

**Table 2.6 Median Household Incomes in Clark County, 1990-2000**

JURISDICTION/AREA	1990	2000	CHANGE 1990-2000
TOTAL CLARK COUNTY	\$31,800	\$48,376	52%
BATTLE GROUND	\$24,256	\$45,070	85%
CAMAS	\$28,576	\$60,187	111%
LA CENTER	\$24,750	\$55,333	123%
RIDGEFIELD	\$26,992	\$46,012	71%
VANCOUVER	\$21,552	\$41,618	93%
WASHOUGAL	\$25,463	\$38,719	52%
YACOLT	\$18,194	\$39,444	117%
WASHINGTON STATE	\$31,183	\$45,776	32%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census NA: not available

The definitions of extremely low, very low, and moderate-income households are established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These terms are based on a percentage of the area's median household income for a family of four. They are used to evaluate income levels in Clark County. Table 2.7 shows the numbers of households in each income category for 1990 and 2000.

**Table 2.7 Households by Income Group in Clark County, 1990 - 2000**

INCOME GROUP	1990		2000	
	# HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENT OF TOTAL	# HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
VERY LOW INCOME (LESS THAN 50% OF MEDIAN)	18,852	21%	26,902	23%
LOW INCOME (50% TO 80% OF MEDIAN)	14,881	17%	21,970	16%
MODERATE INCOME (81% TO 95% OF MEDIAN)	8,238	9%	10,966	8%
MIDDLE AND UPPER INCOME (MORE THAN 95% OF MEDIAN)	47,233	53%	67,422	53%
MEDIAN INCOME	\$31,800		\$48,376	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

\* Figure represents median income for families and unrelated individuals.

Extremely low-income households include households whose incomes are 30% of median and below. Very low-income households are those whose incomes are less than 50 percent of the area's median family income. In 1990, a family of four making between \$9,480 and \$18,852 fell into this category for a total of 18,852 households or 21 percent. For 2000, a family of four making less than \$26,902 fell into this category. This represents a two percent decrease in the number of families with very low incomes between 1990 and 2000 but constitutes more than one-fifth of the county's households.

Low-income households are those whose incomes are between 50 percent and 80 percent of the area's median family income. A family of four making between \$15,900 and \$25,440 in 1990 fell into this category. There were 14,881 households (17 percent of the total) that were defined as low income in 1990. In 2000, a family of four making between \$25,400 and \$30,000 fell into this category for a total of 21,970 households, or 16 percent. This represents a one percent decrease in the number of families with low incomes between 1990 and 2000. Together, in 2000 low income and very low-income households constituted 10 percent of the county's households.

Moderate-income households are those whose incomes are between 80 percent and 95 percent of the area's median family income. A family of four with an income between \$25,440 and \$30,210 in 1990 fell into this category. There were 8,238 households (9 percent of the total) that were defined as moderate income in 1990. In 2000, a family of four making between \$31,800 and \$48,376 fell into this category. There were 10,966 households (8 percent of the total) that were defined as moderate income in 2000. This represents a 1 percent decrease in the number of moderate-income families between 1990 and 2000. Together, in 2000 moderate, low and very low-income households constituted 10.1 percent of Clark County's households.

## **PERCENT OF INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING**

HUD defines housing cost burden as the extent to which gross housing costs, including utility costs, exceed 30 percent of gross income, based on data published by the U.S. Census Bureau. This is the threshold at which the cost of housing typically becomes a burden. At this point the money available for other necessary expenses such as food and medical care is reduced.

Generally, upper income households can afford a higher percentage of income for housing than can lower income households. The percentage of income spent on housing increases as income decreases. The lowest income households are, therefore, most likely to be overpaying for housing relative to their income and in need of assistance.

The HCD notes that between 1994 and 1998, the cost of a newly constructed single family home in Clark County rose from \$124,900 to \$146,038, an increase of 17 percent. The cost of an existing single family home went from \$111,000 in 1994 to \$137,500 in 1998, an increase of 24 percent. New and existing home prices are increasing at a substantial rate. However, the trend has slowed down from the early 1990's. From 1989 to 1993, newly constructed single family home prices in Clark County had increased 30 percent, and existing single family home prices had increased 53 percent. The median sale prices are still increasing faster than wages in the county. This means that more and more people are being priced out of the market. Based on the projected increases in housing costs, new housing could be unaffordable to extremely low, very low, low income and moderate-income households of Clark County.

## **SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS**

Some people in Clark County need modified housing units or special services in order to live independently. Other people require living in a group home or institutional environment. While some of these people will have the resources to take care of their needs, many will not. The HCD identified these special housing needs in Clark County and made recommendations for serving those needs:



## Physically Challenged Persons

- **Physically Challenged:** The US Census reports that there are approximately 41,350 people under the age of 64 have a disability, mobility and/or self-care limitations.
- **Frail Elderly:** The US Census reports that there are approximately 14,251 frail elderly people residing in Clark County.
- **Developmentally Disabled:** The Clark County Department of Community Services estimates that there are approximately 6,178 persons (.01 percent of the county population) with developmental disabilities in the county. The State Division of Developmental Disabilities serves 1,646 of these persons.

The majority of the housing need for physically challenged persons is among the elderly. These people may need special housing with ramps instead of stairs, elevators for units with two or more stories and modified facilities. The federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 require changes to building and zoning codes to improve access for disabled persons. These codes will apply to new construction and to major rehabilitation or remodeling of existing units.

Experience in states which have had similar legislation for the past decade indicates that adaptations to ensure accessibility and mobility for the disabled add less than \$1,000 on average to the cost of new multi-family housing. It is more expensive and not always possible to modify an existing unit for handicapped accessibility. Older units, particularly older multi-family structures, are very expensive to retrofit for disabled occupants because space is rarely available for modifications such as elevator shafts, ramps, and widened doorways. Much of the existing multi-family housing (traditionally the more affordable housing) cannot economically be modified to meet the needs of disabled residents.

## Senior Citizens

Senior citizens are defined as people over age 62. The elderly are generally considered a special needs group because of the high correlation between age and disability. Also, many seniors live on a fixed income. They cannot afford higher rents, and if they own their own home they may not be able to afford the cost of increasing taxes or maintenance. A fixed income also may not permit them to rent a new apartment in a new facility that would provide them with a full range of care services.

In 2000, there were 32,808 senior citizens living in Clark County. Of which 63 percent (20,578) of senior citizens live in family households headed by people over age 65 - Table 2.8. Another 27 percent (8,695) live alone. At least 4 percent (1,332) of the senior citizens live in-group quarters (e.g. nursing or retirement homes) and 7 percent (2,203) live with family or friends.

**Table 2.8 Senior Citizens Housing Arrangements in Clark County, 2000**

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
FAMILY HOUSEHOLD (HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD OVER 65)	20,578	63
LIVING ALONE	8,695	27
GROUP QUARTERS	1,332	4
OTHER SITUATIONS	2,203	7
TOTAL	32,808	100

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The population of elderly residents is increasing and will continue to increase through the end of the decade. In addition, people are living longer and the number of people over 75 is increasing, currently the 2000 census reports that they 15,780 over the age of 75 living in Clark County. The majority of the elderly populations prefer to live independently in family units or alone. This population would be well served by smaller, affordable and accessible rental and housing units. Elderly persons who live with family or friends might benefit from zoning provisions that allow for another, smaller unit to be built on single-family lots.

### Homeless Persons

HUD defines "homeless" as those persons or families which "(1) lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or (2) whose nighttime residence is a public or private emergency shelter, an institution that provides temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings." This definition does not include persons forced to live with friends or relatives, in unsafe or inappropriate housing. This definition also excludes recently homeless persons who are in transitional housing programs but have not yet attained housing self-sufficiency.

In 2003, the Clark County Council for the Homeless, reported that approximately 4000 different individuals asked for shelter in one of the county's 272 beds. The Council for the Homeless notes that the fastest growing groups of homeless persons in Clark County are two parent families with children, single women with children, single persons and older adults

The Emergency Shelter Clearinghouse operates a referral hotline from 9:00 am until 8:00 pm seven days a week to refer homeless persons to available shelter.

- **Families with Children:** This is Clark County's largest un-housed population. Both single and two parent families are sheltered in all except one shelter facility on a space available basis. Most shelters allow a 30-day stay.
- **Youths:** A minimal number of homeless youth are being served in the county. There are three different programs with 29 slots available for kids who meet Washington's states definition of homeless. Janus Youth estimates that annually they see 1,000 homeless youth at the Portland shelters. Out of this 1,000 or 11% are from Clark County. Washington state law does not allow emergency shelters to admit unaccompanied youths. Minor children are the responsibility of their parents or guardians, or they may be served by the foster home services of

the Department of Health and Human Services. The HCD notes that many youths do not seek foster care assistance, but may be living with friends or are homeless on the streets without shelter.

- **Domestic Violence:** There is currently one emergency shelter (28 spaces) in Clark County for victims of domestic violence. The Safe Choice Shelter took in 383 people providing over 10,550 bed-nights in 2003. The shelter turned away 3,448 people. This means 90 percent of the women and children who sought shelter from domestic violence could not be served in Clark County.

Based on this information, homeless persons have a significant need for housing in Clark County. Housing policies should address the needs of this population, as well as the needs of persons at 30 percent of area median income and below. Since some homeless families and individuals have disabilities or require a period of extra support, a strategy should include permanent supportive housing.

## PROJECTED HOUSEHOLD GROWTH

The population growth forecast of OFM is translated into approximately 54,000 additional households who will be seeking housing in Clark County by the year 2023. Table 2.9 highlights the percent change of 10 years and the average annual change within the county. Based on growth projections from the Washington Office of Financial Management, the county will grow at a rate of 1.83 percent per year. The characteristics of these households are likely to change over the period covered by the 20-Year Plan as the population of the county, the state and the United States as whole ages. In 1990, households with elderly heads made up 6.4 percent of the total households. Projections indicate that elderly households will increase to 17.5 percent of the total in 2010, almost a threefold increase.

**Table 2.9 Population Trends, 1950-2023 in Clark County**

YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION	10-YEAR INCREASE	10-YEAR % CHANGE	AVERAGE ANNUAL % CHANGE
1950	85,307	NA	NA	NA
1960	93,809	8,502	10.0	1.0
1970	128,454	34,645	36.9	3.7
1980	192,227	63,773	49.6	2.0
1990	238,053	45,826	23.8	2.4
2000	345,238	107,185	45	4.7
2010	432,479	87,241	25.2	1.8
2023	534,191	N/A	N/A	N/A

Sources: Washington State Office of Financial Management, April 1 Intercensal and Postcensal Estimates of the Total Resident Population by Year 1968-2002.

## Housing Resources in Clark County

Table 2.10 shows the number and type of housing units in Clark County for the period 1980-2000. The total number of housing units in Clark County in 2000 was 134,030. Single family homes make up 71 percent (94,664) of this stock. Multi-family homes constitute 22.5 percent (30,217) of this stock. Manufactured homes make up 6.5 percent (8,833) of the housing stock of Clark County.

**Table 2.10 Number of Housing Types in Clark County, 1980-2000**

HOUSING TYPES	1980	1990	2000
SINGLE FAMILY UNITS*	54,900	63,681	94,664
MULTI-FAMILY UNITS	13,758	21,033	30,217
MANUFACTURED UNITS	3,994	7,520	8,833
UNKNOWN	NA	615	316
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>72,652</b>	<b>92,849</b>	<b>134,030</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census \* Includes attached and detached units

Using 1980-2000 figures, the total number of housing units in the county has risen by 31 percent since 1990 and 46 percent since 1980. The number of single family units has risen 33 percent since 1990 and 42 percent since 1980. Multi-family units have increased in number by 30 percent since 1990 and 54 percent since 1980. Manufactured housing has shown the smallest increase of 15 percent over 1990 figures and 55 percent since 1980.

### County Funding for Affordable Housing

In the spring of 2003, the Clark County memorialized the recommendations to dedicate document recording fees to affordable housing as presented by community stakeholders. This funding source was developed as a result of House Bill 2060, which was passed by the Washington State Legislature during the 2002 session. SB 2060 established a dedicated source of revenue for affordable housing, a \$10 recording fee. The fees are collected by County Auditor who may retain up to 5 percent for administration. The remaining funds are split into two categories. Sixty percent of the funds are to go to local jurisdictions for the sole use of housing for people between 0 - 50% of the area median income. The remaining 40 percent goes to the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development for allocation of operational support to state funded projects that service households from 0 – 30% of the area median income.

The CDBG and HOME Program staff hosted two community meetings to solicit recommendations for the use of the local funding. The total is estimated to be \$750,000 annually. The community group developed the following recommendations regarding the distribution of funds:

- **Capital funds for transitional and permanent housing:** Thirty percent (30%) of the funds are would be used for development of transitional and permanent housing, including acquisition and rehab or new construction costs. New construction is only an eligible use if vacancy rates are under 10%. The document recording fee revenues can leverage other capital resources such as HOME and CDBG.

- **Operating funds for shelters, transitional, and permanent housing:** Forty percent (40%) of the funds would be used to maintain the current level of shelter services, provide operating subsidies to transitional or permanent housing providers, or rental assistance vouchers to private for-profit and non-profit housing providers.
- **Creation of a Local Housing Bond:** Approximately 1/3 (a flat \$250,000) per year of the available revenue, would be used to purchase a 10-year low-income housing bond. Bond proceeds, estimated at approximately \$2,000,000, will be deposited in an interest bearing account for the purpose of land or housing acquisition. The land banking approach, made possible with the bond, would allow Clark County to secure property while costs and interest rates are as low as they are likely to be in the foreseeable future. This bonding mechanism will would also assist Clark County, and the cities within the county, to meet their housing goals as contemplated outlined in the Growth Management Act, including goals for affordable housing.

The Clark County Housing Review Board, a local group of citizens appointed by the county was given responsibility for oversight of the Clark County funds associated with SB 2060. The county approved the plan, goals, and designated of the Clark Housing Review Board (CHRB). In response to the approved plan, staff worked with stakeholders to implement the following goals. As of January 1, 2004, there was approximately \$1.2 million in the fund.

Manufactured housing is a major source of affordable housing in Clark County. Manufactured housing units are distinguished from "mobile homes" because they are more durable and less mobile in nature. Once manufactured housing units are sited, they are rarely moved. Additionally, manufactured housing meets HUD standards, which makes it possible to get a loan to purchase a new manufactured home with little or no down payment. The buyer can also purchase the land to site the manufactured home on contract, with little down payment. This is a very attractive option for those with little savings.

## HOUSING TENURE

Table 2.11 shows housing units by type of occupancy over time. In 2000, five percent (6,822) of the total units were vacant. This is considered a normal or healthy vacancy rate. The remaining 95 percent (127,208) were occupied. Of these, 67 percent (85,550) of the units in Clark County were owner-occupied. The remaining 33 percent (41,658) were occupied by renters.

**Table 2.11 Number of Housing Units  
by Occupancy Type in Clark County, 1980-2000**

HOUSING OCCUPANCY TYPE	1980	1990	2000
<b>TOTAL HOUSING UNITS</b>	72,652	92,849	134,030
<b>VACANT UNITS</b>	3,902	4,409	6,822
<b>OCCUPIED UNITS</b>	68,750	88,440	127,208
<b>OWNER-OCCUPIED UNITS</b>	46,350	56,872	85,550
<b>RENTER OCCUPIED UNITS</b>	22,400	31,568	41,658

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

## Housing Costs

The HCD report notes that affordable housing is generally associated with an adequate supply of older housing. The 2000 Census indicated that Clark County has over 7,481 housing units that were built in 1939 or earlier. This is 2.9 percent of the current housing stock. There are 5,063 owner-occupied units and 2,418 rental units that were built in 1939 or earlier. Future affordability will be greatly affected by market conditions. However, it can be assumed that existing older housing stock will continue to provide many of the more affordable units in the future, unless there is some form of public intervention in helping to reduce the costs of new units.

## Rental Costs

Table 2.12 shows the average rental costs for the Vancouver area for the period of 2000-2004. A one-bedroom unit in the Vancouver area rented for an average of \$569 per month in 2000. The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment increased about 14 percent between 2000 and 2004, which was an average increase of 3.5 percent per year.

**Table 2.12 Annual Average Rents in the Vancouver Area, 2000-2004**

YEAR	ONE BEDROOM	TWO BEDROOM	THREE BEDROOM
2000	\$569	\$702	\$976
2001	\$592	\$730	\$1,015
2002	\$606	\$747	\$1,038
2003	\$625	\$771	\$1073
2004	\$644	\$795	\$1,106

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Renters in Clark County are diverse. For some moderate and upper income households, renting is a choice despite the fact that they have the financial means to buy a home. For some young households, renting is a stepping stone to future homeownership. For many low and moderate-income households, however, renting is the only financially feasible choice due to the high cost of ownership. The rising cost of renting has the greatest effect on the most vulnerable of Clark County's population. Once rents get too high low-income households are forced to double up with family members, live in an apartment that is far away from their job, school, or social networks, or sometimes are even forced into homelessness.

## SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

According to HCD, rent assistance programs are available to assist the 3,679 low-income renter households in need of rent assistance. Single person non-elderly (or non-disabled) households are not eligible for assisted housing under the programs now offered in the county.

The Vancouver Housing Authority serves a total of 3,163 Clark County households with rental assistance and subsidized housing. The VHA owns 719 units of federally subsidized Low Rent Public Housing and Section 8 New Construction. This program includes

150 units at Skyline Crest, (a development that is also home to the RISE & STARS Community Center), two downtown Vancouver high-rises for elderly, frail elderly, and disabled people, 30 units at Fruit Valley, 14 in Camas, 12 in Ridgefield, and 269 units scattered throughout Clark County.

In 2003, the VHA contracted with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to administer 2,235 Housing Choice and Mod Rehab rental vouchers. Both the low-rent public housing and the voucher program are designed to allow low-income families, elderly and disabled residents to pay 30 percent of their income for rent.

The VHA also contracts with several nonprofit corporations to manage two properties for disabled people, two group homes, three properties that provide transitional housing, and five properties for low-income seniors. In addition the VHA owns 100 units of Medicaid assisted living for low-income frail elderly people and 1,707. Workforce housing is defined as housing that is closer to market rate and is used as an investment to provide local funding for deeply subsidized housing.

## **MARKET AND INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCES ON HOUSING PRODUCTION**

Typical of most communities in the United States, the primary influences on housing price in the county include, but are not limited to:

- land use controls which limit both the areas where housing may be built and the density of development, with a resulting impact on land cost and development costs;
- building code requirements (such as those related to the Americans with Disabilities Act; energy efficiency, etc.) which may increase construction costs and ultimately increase housing price;
- off site improvement requirements;
- finance costs such as interest rates, other loan costs;
- tax limitations measures that limit the public sector's ability to subsidize housing development;
- materials and construction costs; and,
- in migration and mismatches in housing supply and demand.

Most notably, the construction costs and home purchase prices rise with interest rates. Since the large number of savings and loan failures in the late 1980s, federal regulators have reduced the percentage of an institution's portfolio, which can be in real estate development. This has resulted in making financing of residential development more difficult. Similarly, increases in land costs or construction costs will increase the cost of the housing, which is developed unless more units can be built on the same site. Rising energy costs increase the costs of construction and maintenance of housing units; however, conservation measures can reduce lifecycle costs for energy.

## **THE HOUSING NEEDS CONTINUUM IN CLARK COUNTY**

Housing affordability issues impact all households, in all income groups. Every household has an income, at one level or another, and must find housing that meets but does not exceed the requirements of the income level. Sometimes, this relationship is called "attainability." Households at higher incomes have fewer housing affordability problems,

largely because their incomes allow greater flexibility to access housing at, or less than, their incomes. In addition, there are generally more housing units available within their income ranges. Persons with lower incomes have more housing affordability problems partially because their ability to access housing in their target price range is limited by persons from higher ranges "buying down," and by limited numbers of units. In addition, the lower the income range, the less potential the household has for "buying down".

What is affordable housing? Housing affordability is expressed by lenders, government officials, and ordinary citizens in different ways. Lenders generally claim that affordable housing is housing expenditure at or below 30 percent of household income. A household earning \$48,376 (the county median in 1999) should spend no more than \$14,512 per year or \$1209 per month on housing. This may be in rent or in house payments.

It is apparent that the definition of affordable housing has altered over time and continues to be in dispute depending on the perspective of the groups involved. Lenders and bureaucrats respond in a manner assessing the total debt limit that appears to be a reasonable lending risk at any point in time. Families respond in terms of their personal preferences and their other debts. Low and moderate-income advocates respond in terms of the impracticality of accumulating four figure down payments and in terms of the potentially disastrous impact on people with fragile incomes when every available penny is committed to housing.

There are six components when addressing the affordability issue which include the following:

- availability of properly zoned and buildable land;
- cost of borrowing money;
- regulatory restrictions, in all their forms, influence affordability;
- consumer expectations;
- wage/housing balance which is the relationship between the wages earned by people in the community and the housing price; and
- jobs/housing balance which is the relationship between the location of jobs and the location housing.

All these components need to be addressed in determining the affordability issue for a community.

This Chapter defines housing affordability as a range of expenditure, which should be between 30 percent of income and/or house purchases at 2.5 times household incomes. These are conservative measures, which serve to decrease the amount of expenditure suitable for housing from those levels illustrated by many lenders in their standard publications. It is believed that these measures, however, are more reflective of the real level of expenses that moderate and low income households can bear, noting that most households have standing financial commitments that decrease their loan to value ratios.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The inventory and analysis presented in this Chapter lead to the identification of a variety of factors that will affect the ability of households in Clark County to find suitable affordable housing. The following highlights the issues effecting housing affordability for all segments of the population in the future.

The two fastest growing age groups in the county over the last ten years have been people aged 40 to 59 and children 0 to 19. The growth of people aged 20 to 39 and the elderly has slowed down dramatically since the growth in the 1980's. Considering the rising cost of rents and ownership this trend is not surprising. It is no longer as affordable for young families and the elderly to live in Clark County as in the past. These are the first groups to be effected by rising housing costs because in general, their income is lower than those aged 40 to 59.

The cost for land and construction of new housing has been increasing rapidly over the past five years. If the trend continues, then there will be even less affordable new housing built in the county. The needs of middle as well as lower income households will be more difficult to meet with new housing.

Restrictions on local government funding resources have resulted in increasing use of development impact fees to pay for the cost of extending services to new housing developments. However, these impact fees increase the cost of the new housing. The goal of making new development "pay its own way" may run counter to the goal of producing an adequate supply of affordable housing.

Changes in federal regulation of the banking and savings and loan industries have affected the availability of financing for residential development, and the types of projects being financed. It is much harder to finance projects now, and financial institutions are requiring greater equity participation by the developer in each project. It is also more difficult to find financing for unusual or creative housing designs which might reduce the cost of each home to the purchaser or renter. Federal, state and local governments should consider public subsidies in order to ensure that such housing is available.

Increasing federal, state, and local environmental protection regulations have reduced the amount of land available for development and increased the time and cost involved in producing housing. The goal of protecting sensitive environmental resources may run counter to the goal of producing an adequate supply.

The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) requires that financial institutions demonstrate that they invest a portion of their funds in the community where they are located, and where their customers live. The act is particularly concerned with investment loans for home purchase and rehabilitation loans in older neighborhoods. The intent is to discourage "redlining", or the practice of refusing to make loans for properties located in older or predominantly minority neighborhoods. The CRA provides an opportunity for local developers and non-profit agencies to work with the banks and savings and loans to develop affordable housing and to maintain or improve existing housing in older neighborhoods.

Until the early 1980s the federal government provided most of the support for the creation and maintenance of affordable housing, including tax incentives and direct funding of construction and operating costs. The withdrawal of this support, coupled with a changing economic environment, has severely reduced the availability of affordable housing. The absence of the federal government, and lack of history or experience of the state and local government and the private sector in funding affordable housing, has resulted in a confusion of roles and responsibilities. In order to provide the housing needed by the low and middle income population, it will be necessary for the county, cities, state and the private sector to

create new working relationships if the needs for financing, construction or acquisition and maintenance of housing are to be met.

## **Fair Housing**

The goal of fair housing is to encourage freedom of choice in the sale or rental of dwellings. Fair housing rights are established both through federal law (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968) and Washington State legislation (WAC 49.60.222 through 224). The private sector and public sector housing agencies are very familiar with these principles as they apply to buyer/seller or landlord/tenant relationships. Discrimination based on race, color, age, sex, religion and national origin is prohibited.

In 1988, the Federal Fair Housing Act was amended in a manner that makes it evident that it is not legal to deny persons with disabilities the opportunity to live in a community. The amendment also makes it clear that persons may not be discriminated against on the basis of family status. The Washington Housing Policy Act, adopted in 1993, reinforces these principles by prohibiting local ordinances that treat households with disabilities differently from other households. For the purpose of this plan, written in 1993 and updated in 2002, low-income persons are not considered a group protected under fair housing laws. If applied, income tests must be applied to all groups (e.g., disabled, racial, national origin) equally.

Several of the groups specifically noted in fair housing laws are commonly referred to as "special populations." Special populations include the physically disabled, mentally disabled, mentally ill, homeless, and other persons who may experience barriers to housing because of a disability or condition. Special needs populations are among the most noticeable persons needing fair housing protection. Fair housing, however, is a broader concept that attempts to protect all citizens from unfair or discriminatory treatment.

In the development of land use regulations, communities must examine whether the effect of a regulation, action or policy is exclusionary. Local land use policies, regulations and actions must not have the effect of excluding individuals from Clark County or cities within Clark County. Persons should be able to find a variety of housing opportunities.

The Clark County 20-Year Plan proposes that an essential element in the continued achievement of fair housing is a land use regulatory approach that allows anyone seeking housing to take "managed risks". That is, regulations should protect public health and safety, but not to the point that the regulations have the effect of excluding populations from finding housing that they can afford. Fair housing should not become a paternalistic approach to protection that eventually excludes the disabled, elderly, or other individuals.

The 20-Year Plan also works toward fair housing by using the household, rather than the family, as the basic definition for an assemblage of persons in a dwelling unit.

Household is a broader term that allows for non-nuclear families, unrelated individuals, domestic partnerships, caregivers and other arrangements. A household orientation reflects the increasing diversity of living arrangements in the county.

Incentives for fair housing and a greater awareness of how the principle serves to protect all persons will be increasingly necessary in the future as Clark County's population grows and diversifies. Fair housing requires the attention of many segments of the community. Appropriate land use practices are a necessary step. These practices must be reinforced by fair lending practices, underwriting standards, appraisals, bonding and by other implementation policies and procedures that effectuate, on a daily basis, principles of fairness. Central to fairness is a clear understanding of both the income characteristics of the community and the characteristics of housing. Over time, the county's racial structure, household living arrangements, number of special needs persons, etc. will change. There is

a continuing need to educate government officials and citizens to their individual rights and to the rights of others.

### **Special Needs Housing**

It is the intent of this plan to encourage self-determination and independence among individuals with special needs. County and the cities policies, ordinances, and codes should treat people with special needs equivalent to the general population.

Land use regulations should not discriminate against these households. Land use regulations should be limited to the impact of the use upon the landscape, without consideration of the circumstance of the persons in the household.

People with special needs, just like other segments of the population, want to locate across the county, depending upon personal preferences and upon the locations of family and friends, health care, support services and transit. Housing provided by both the public and private sectors will allow the greatest range of locational choices. Special needs populations live throughout the county at this time, even though they may be under served or be limited in their access to housing. In the next 20 years, neighborhoods across the county should become accessible to special needs individuals. There is a dual responsibility; neighborhoods must become more accepting of people with special needs, and people with special needs must become good neighbors in their community.

Just as people with special needs want to live in different neighborhoods, their specific housing needs vary also. Not all disabled persons require housing adapted with rehabilitated kitchens, bathrooms, etc. Not all persons require assistance from a caregiver. It is important that planners have knowledge of the needs of different client groups and avoid generalizations. Providing for people with special needs does not necessarily mean increased levels of social services or infrastructure. It may mean cultivation of a greater awareness of the impact of regulations upon these groups and encouragement of incentives to provide affordable, accessible housing.

The managed risk approach is applicable to all special populations and in particular to individuals traditionally considered "undesirable" because of previous lodging in institutions or correctional facilities. As these individuals rejoin the general public, the public must be protected, but in a reasonable fashion that does not preclude the transition of people to an independent lifestyle.

The Clark County Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan (HCD) examines the needs of special populations in detail from a short-term perspective. The Housing Element of the 20-Year Plan attempts to address needs from a long-term perspective and to propose public and private sector responses to the needs.

### **Neighborhood Character and Vitality**

Clark County's residential neighborhoods vary in size, density, housing type, and amenities. The character of a neighborhood, both its livability and identity, is closely associated with its design, the characteristics of the residents and the services provided. Regardless of the character of the neighborhood, residents generally want a feeling of comfort and security, privacy and a sense of belonging. Neighborhood character is an important element of the Framework Plan and is a central component of an approach that encourages a hierarchy of well-defined places. Over the next 20 years, preservation of existing neighborhoods will require a conscious acknowledgment of the existing nature of the people, visual character and services. New development in previously undeveloped areas should occur with an identifiable visual and service character. Infill development should occur with a visual and service character compatible with existing development.

A population diverse in its age, ethnicity, income, household structure and size, and mental and physical abilities has the potential to create strong and vital neighborhoods. The contribution of individuals, through their participation in public processes or through their daily lives in a neighborhood, influence the character of a neighborhood. Acceptance and appreciation of diverse individuals is a desirable value in now and in the future.

This plan intends to promote service delivery systems that are highly visible to users, accessible and centrally located on a neighborhood district basis. A major objective of the 20-Year Plan is to ensure that housing remains affordable for all income groups. One of the advantages of the 20-Year Plan is the variety of housing options, which will be available for residents.

## **Infill**

In order to achieve the goals of the 20-Year Plan, Clark County and other jurisdictions must encourage the use of infill parcels for homes and also must ensure that development is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Infill is a term used to describe development of parcels that were "passed over" in a first phase of development. Some lots in the urban area were not developed because they continued in rural uses such as horse lots, orchards, etc.. In some cases, there was insufficient demand for the land or people chose not to develop right away. The physical development constraints of some parcels, such as drainage ways, steep slopes, etc. may also lead to them being "passed over." The parcels are now surrounded by development, which may be residential, commercial or industrial in nature. In some areas, infill will mean mixing housing with commercial development and may require special consideration of physical constraints, existing infrastructure and adjacent land use.

Infill development is central to achieving target densities and to reducing sprawl. Targeted infill development sites can also serve to focus public investment in areas, which have existing urban development but need additional infrastructure to support increased densities. This type of infill development could include co-locating employment centers with housing, thereby reducing vehicle miles traveled, lessening congestion and reducing the overall costs for infrastructure.

## **Accessory Units**

Accessory units are another method for increasing density in a manner that may be affordable. Accessory housing units are complete living quarters constructed within an existing single family lot. They occur through conversion of an attic, a basement, a garage or other space. They are always secondary in size to the existing dwelling, usually less than 900 square feet. Common names for these units include granny flats, mother-in-law apartments, and bachelor units. Some communities allow accessory units to be free standing. Freestanding units are generally called echo units or accessory cottages. Accessory units combine the advantages of small size, maximizing use of existing dwellings, and income for homeowners as advantages. They must be carefully planned so that negative impacts on neighborhood character (such as architectural incompatibility, traffic and parking) are avoided. Clark County has had an Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance in effect since 1992.

## **Variety in Neighborhoods**

In order to implement the 20-Year Plan in a manner that preserves and enhances neighborhoods while also maintaining identity and livability, Clark County and local jurisdictions will identify the features that make an attractive residential development and ensure that future development include these features. Over time, greater breadth and variety in neighborhood design should be allowed. The flexibility should also be accompanied by consistency and predictability in the development process. A major objective of the 20-

Year Plan is to ensure that housing remains affordable for all income groups. One of the advantages of the 20-Year Plan is the variety of housing options, which will be available for residents. These will include single-family homes on a variety of lot sizes, as well as multi-family homes (apartments, condominiums, town houses) and mobile homes. This variety is expected to make it easier for the home building community to develop housing in a range of price affordable and attractive to all county residents.

### **Fair Share**

The state GMA directs all communities to formulate policies that allow accommodation of their "fair share" of housing types and income groups. The growth management act does not explicitly require a numerical approach to fair share. In general, the fair share process should provide low and moderate income housing targets for cities, urban growth areas and county rural areas that are achievable in a progressive manner over the 20-year planning period. The allocation process should identify programs and finance mechanisms that will result in the construction and rehabilitation of housing so that the targets are meaningful. Noting the complexity of the task, Clark County determined that preparation of a fair share allocation is a complex process in and of itself and requires a participatory process supported by thorough technical analysis. Formulation of a fair share approach is supported by this plan and is an implementation technique requiring immediate funding and analysis.

The fair share principle has a close relationship to the question of neighborhood character. In accordance with the fair share concept, a community may need to provide for income groups and housing types that are not part of its traditional character. In addition, existing neighborhoods may experience a change in character in order to provide housing for persons of higher or lower income than currently exist. These changes are expected to occur throughout Clark County in a progressive manner. Achievement of a fair share concept will require adequate financing, community design, public involvement and attention to the impact of change upon residents of an area.

### **Rehabilitation and Preservation**

The Framework Plan concept, with its emphasis on a hierarchy of identifiable places, supports the preservation and rehabilitation of existing structures. Because existing structures provide much of the character of places, their preservation into the future will provide a basis for definition of community character. Existing structures also provide an opportunity for increased residential density with minimal community disruption when accessory units are allowed within structures and on existing lots. In addition, accessory units and existing houses are often among the most affordable units in the real estate market. Rehabilitation of existing structures also reflects an environmentally conscious approach to neighborhoods, with an orientation toward stewardship and reuse of existing resources.

The Framework Plan, with its emphasis on increased density in urban areas also acknowledges that, over time, existing structures may be replaced with higher density structures, mixed uses or other innovations in land use. In concept, in residential areas, removal of a housing unit, either through demolition or conversion to another use, should be accompanied by replacement of a residential use in the same neighborhood district. The intent of this plan is to place a priority upon rehabilitation and preservation of structures, while acknowledging that, over time, not all structures can or should be retained. In every case, all costs of rehabilitation, including life cycle costs and potential tax credits, must be considered.

Housing rehabilitation must be integrated with a concern for the persons in a structure, and must respond to their social and service needs. Rehabilitated strategies must be tailored to the character of the area served. Rehabilitated buildings should be safe and habitable, but should not be required to meet the same codes as new construction.

Rehabilitation strategies specifically tailored to the condition of the neighborhood, integrating physical, demographic and economic needs provide an opportunity to re-use existing housing stock. Not only is this wise conservation of natural, human, and physical/cultural resources, it also preserves the units most likely to be affordable to low and moderate income persons. As a technique to provide affordability, rehabilitation cannot be over looked or under appreciated.

It is the intent of this Chapter to advocate for safe and habitable housing for all Clark County residents. In order to accomplish this aim and also to preserve affordability, it is essential that building codes allow a tiered approach to acceptable building condition. The cost of rehabilitating structures to the same standards as new construction often is prohibitive, dissuades owners from making improvements and increases the cost of dwellings. Provision also should be made for certified historic preservation and restoration projects, allowing rehabilitation to safe and habitable levels without meeting the same codes as non-historic rehabilitation or new construction. Achievement of this objective may require a statewide approach to revision of codes and a concerted effort on the part of both the public sector (including planners and building officials) and the private sector. Currently there is a low-income home owner rehabilitation program funded with CDBG in Clark County

## **Affordability**

The concern for housing affordability is a nationwide issue. Much of Clark County's growth in the last 20 years can be attributed to its affordability compared to the surrounding region. Clark County and city officials see maintenance of affordability, into the future, as an important objective. The 20-Year Plan, as a government document, provides an opportunity to focus on the leadership role that local government can take to work cooperatively with all segments of the community in order to increase affordability within the context of protecting public health, safety and welfare. Provision of affordable housing for the individual should not come about at the cost of the community as a whole. The interests of the community as a whole, however, include the need to provide housing which is affordable for individuals.

Consumer expectations also play an important role in affordability. Consumers, in all income ranges, exhibit a trend toward increasing expectations for size and amenities. These add to the cost of housing. For most consumers, a house is their single most significant financial investment. Houses are more than a place to live, they impose a significant financial responsibility upon owners and offer an important windfall profit opportunity. In the 1980s and 1990s, homeowners have become increasingly protective of the value, both real and perceived, of their homes. This is often exhibited as NIMBYism (**Not In My Back Yard**) where property owners strenuously object to the introduction of new housing that differs from existing housing in type or value. Many of these objections are based in the fear of people of differing incomes, race, age, or ethnicity and their perceived impacts on the value of property. NIMBYism influences housing affordability and it results in excessive delays in permit review processes or effectively excludes legitimate housing types or income groups from neighborhoods. In the planning process, this intolerance must not be underestimated but must be recognized and planned for in education programs, public hearing processes and in programs that attempt to create a sense of community that extends beyond the financial commitment of a house purchase.

Just as supply and demand interact to influence cost, housing price and local wages interact to influence affordability. A dual effort to increase local wages while also retaining

moderately priced housing, will keep housing affordable to more of the population. Housing affordability is a relationship between an individual's income and the price of housing.

From the perspective of community planning, it is desirable to provide both jobs and housing within a community, for the benefit of individuals and the community tax base. The relationship of jobs and housing is described in two ways:

- the wage/housing balance is the relationship between the wages earned by people in the community and the housing price. Ideally, there is a sufficient number of housing units affordable to all levels of wage earners, and
- the jobs/housing balance is the relationship between the location of jobs and the location of housing. Ideally, jobs are created in locations that are convenient to housing.

In both relationships, the planning objective is to create opportunities so people who want to live close to work may do so. There is no requirement (or assurance) that the people working a particular job will live in the proximal housing, or vice versa. The two principles may be applied separately or together when looking at a community's affordability strategy. The intent of the Housing Element is to assure that communities investigate both relationships, and attempt to achieve both a jobs/housing and wage/housing balance within their urban area.

Traditionally, planners have looked at a jobs/housing balance, and have tried to promote housing opportunities in locations close to the workplace. This helps community diversity and reduces commute trips. Now, with the interest in affordability, communities are also looking at wage/housing balances, trying to promote availability of housing that workers can afford close to their jobs.

The Economic Development Element, Chapter 9 of the 20-Year Plan includes general policies and strategies and also includes strategies to improve wages. Many of the Housing Element's programs and regulations provide tools to address the housing affordability issue. The local plans will address the location issue and the wage/housing issue through their statements on the need for affordable housing.

### **Inclusionary Zoning**

An innovative tool to provide affordable housing is a voluntary inclusionary zoning program. A voluntary inclusionary program would be based on incentives for developers to build a percentage (usually 10 - 15%) of housing in their subdivision as affordable. The units would be smaller, simpler homes in a compatible design with the rest of the subdivision. In exchange for the affordable units, developers would be given incentives that would make it profitable for them, such as density incentives, expedited review, or impact fee waivers.

Inclusionary zoning does several things. It can integrate low and moderate income housing units into market rate subdivisions and avoid concentrations of low-income housing into one neighborhood. Increased density in some neighborhoods can encourage the viability of transit. Employers located in suburban communities benefit as well by having an accessible low and moderate-income workforce.

Neighborhood character is important to preserve, and inclusionary zoning allows this to happen by giving the design control to the developer. Unlike infill, the affordable units are part of the subdivision plan and can be designed to be similar to their surrounding homes. This allows a community to retain its character while accommodating affordable housing.

Inclusionary zoning can be an important tool to provide affordable housing to the growing number of households in Clark County that are priced out of the market. Homeownership prices have been escalating in the county, which has priced out many working families out of homeownership. Inclusionary zoning can provide homeownership

opportunities for those families by making it profitable for developers to build homes that those families can afford. Inclusionary zoning, through partnerships with non-profits and public agencies, can also provide affordable rental opportunities in new subdivisions.

### **Financing Affordable Housing**

Finance of housing, and in particular affordable housing, is a specialized market niche that requires the cooperation of land developers, builders, government and lenders. Finance plays a vital role in the final cost of housing and its associated infrastructure. An intent of this plan is to both identify and advocate for finance mechanisms for housing and associated infrastructure that are stable. Both housing and infrastructure improvements are long-term investments. Mechanisms that are predictable over time may stabilize risk and increase the potential for project funding. This does not imply that new finance mechanisms and institutional structures will not or should not arise over time, or that interim finance mechanisms are not appropriate.

It means to say that a long-term view of finance mechanisms is necessary. In the last twenty years, the nation's financial institutions, lending systems and local taxing mechanisms have undergone radical change. More change should be expected in the next twenty years.

Another important component of this plan is the recognition that the public, not for profit and private finance sectors all play an important role in housing finance. A healthy and complete housing finance system will involve the participation of all three sectors in a manner that most appropriately reflects public purpose, capital requirements, costs, interest rates and other influences on the financial markets. Public sector financing of housing is traditionally identified with housing for the lowest income groups and involves the deepest direct subsidies. The public sector is also involved in middle and high-income subsidies to housing, however, through tax policies. The public sector's role is changing however, as the need for partnership approaches to finance emerges.

The not for profit sector is an emerging finance sector. Working with private sector partners, the nonprofit sector can access public funds in order to meet a public purpose while the private sector partner can offer the deep financial backing required to develop housing. The Vancouver Housing Authority has partnered in this way to develop eleven properties that use bond financing to develop affordable housing for households at or below 80% of area median income. Two of the developments include tax credit equity, allowing the rents to be affordable to households at or below 60% of area median income. These properties will remain a community asset to be used for future affordable housing needs.

Private sector finance is the mainstay of housing development. Increasingly, in order to meet the needs of low and moderate income persons, the private finance institutions need the assistance of the public and not for profit sector. The private sector also has responsibilities to invest in communities through the Community Reinvestment Act. CRA goals often give impetus both to partnerships with the other sectors and to innovative financing techniques.

### **Housing Types, Housing Tenure, Sufficient Land and All Income Groups**

The Growth Management Act is clear in its direction that comprehensive plans are to provide sufficient land and opportunities for a variety of housing types, ranging from site built to off site manufactured. It is clear in its direction that special needs housing must be accommodated within the community. It is also clear that the housing and land use elements of local plans must be structured in a manner that makes it possible for persons of all income groups to have a degree of choice in their geographic search for housing.



Sufficient land must be available for housing so that all income groups can exercise a choice to live in a community.

The Land Use Element, Chapter 2 of the 20-Year Plan provides, in both policy and mapped form, a vision of the location of land uses in the future. The Land Use Element contains areas planned for residential, commercial, industrial, forest, agricultural, recreation and other land uses. The residential plan identifies areas for single and multiple family uses at a variety of densities. It includes mixed-use areas where a combination of commercial, institutional and residential uses are allowed. It also includes agricultural and forest areas where residential uses are allowed at a low density. The Land Use Element specifies target densities for the uses.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

Clark County has developed general goals and policies it will use to direct housing development. The Clark County Housing policies are as follows:

### 2.1 County-wide Planning Policies

- 2.1.0 The county and each municipality shall prepare an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing.
- 2.1.1 The Comprehensive Plan of the county and each municipality shall identify sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, and group homes and foster care facilities. All jurisdictions will cooperate to plan for a "fair share" of the region's affordable housing needs and housing for special needs population.
- 2.1.2 Link economic development and housing strategies to achieve parity between job development and housing affordability.
- 2.1.3 Link transportation and housing strategies to assure reasonable access to multi-modal transportation systems and to encourage housing opportunities in locations that will support the development of public transportation.
- 2.1.4 Link housing strategies with the locations of work sites and jobs.
- 2.1.5 Link housing strategies with the availability of public facilities and public services.
- 2.1.6 Encourage infill housing within cities and towns and urban growth areas.
- 2.1.7 Encourage flexible and cost efficient land use regulations that allow for the creation of alternative housing types which will meet the needs of an economically diverse population.

### 20-Year Planning Policies

**GOAL:** *Provide for a diversity in the type, density, location, and affordability of housing throughout the county and its cities. Encourage and support equal access to housing for rental and homeowners and protect public health and safety.*

### 2.2 Policies:

- 2.2.1 Ensure that implementation measures recognize variety of family structure.
- 2.2.2 Encourage a variety of housing types and densities, including mixed-use centers, services and amenities.
- 2.2.3 Clark County shall create a voluntary inclusionary zoning program with bonus incentives strategies. A demonstration project should be created to illustrate profitability to finance institutions and developers and to illustrate the effectiveness of the policy to the public.
- 2.2.4 Develop a fair share housing allocation that provides low and moderate income housing targets for cities and urban growth areas. The program should include a housing inventory, incentives, and financing mechanisms.

- 2.2.5 Preserve the character of stable residential neighborhoods through selective and innovative zoning techniques.
- 2.2.6 Encourage a variety of housing types and densities in residential neighborhoods.
- 2.2.7 Encourage infill as a development and redevelopment concept. Appropriate development regulations that accomplish infill should consider:
  - impact on older/existing neighborhoods;
  - development that is appropriate to surrounding residential density, housing type, affordability or use characteristics;
  - encouragement of affordable units;
  - maintenance of neighborhood integrity and compatibility; and,
  - provision of development standards and processes for infill regardless of the sector (public, not for profit, or private sectors) creating it.
- 2.2.8 Assure that policies, codes and ordinances promote neighborhood designs that are pedestrian and transit friendly and discourage reliance upon the automobile.
- 2.2.9 The county should take appropriate action to encourage the preservation and expansion of the current stock of federally subsidized affordable housing.

#### **Washougal Urban Growth Area**

- 2.2.10 The Development Code will provide for mobile and manufactured housing in a manner that ensures that such developments contribute to the design quality, landscape standards and safety of the community.
- 2.2.11 The Development Code will encourage innovative housing design for efficient, low cost, high-density housing.
- 2.2.12 The Development Code will provide for group homes and other institutional housing for special needs persons.
- 2.2.13 The City will encourage individual and neighborhood beautification programs using garden clubs, schools and other local groups.

***GOAL: Plan for increasing housing needs of low-income and special needs households.***

### **2.3 Policies**

- 2.3.1 Assure that codes and ordinances allow for a continuum of care and housing opportunities for special needs populations, such as emergency housing, transitional housing, extensive support, minimal support, independent living, family based living, or institutions.
- 2.3.2 Clark County or local jurisdictions shall plan for low-income and special needs housing that is well served by public transit.
- 2.3.3 Ordinances shall allow for housing for special needs populations as permitted/conditional uses, by basing siting decisions on the impact of the use upon the landscape, not on the circumstances of the occupants.
- 2.3.4 Building and site plan codes shall encourage the development, rehabilitation and adaptation of housing that responds to the physical needs of special populations.
- 2.3.5 Encourage both the public and private sector (including financial institutions) to invest in the creation of special needs housing.

- 2.3.6 Continue to coordinate the development of special needs housing with social service providers and with public agencies that provide services and capital.
- 2.3.7 Encourage provision of very low and low income housing through the use of document recording fees dedicated to affordable housing.

**GOAL:** *Provide assistance for maintenance and rehabilitation of housing for Clark County residents.*

## **2.4 Policies**

- 2.4.1 Encourage programs in deteriorating older neighborhoods that address structural, demographic and economic issues.
- 2.4.2 Work with building officials to encourage rehabilitation that provide for safe and sanitary housing.
- 2.4.3 Encourage voluntary housing rehabilitation programs.
- 2.4.4 In areas where housing is rated as fair or below by the local assessor, focus public investment on infrastructure surrounding the dwelling as well as rehabilitation efforts.
- 2.4.5 Maintain the housing stock by rehabilitation homes rated as fair or below by the local assessor.
- 2.4.6 Enhance the safety of housing by reducing the lead based paint hazard.

**GOAL:** *Promote an active role in affordable housing using a combination of regulatory, partnership and finance techniques.*

## **2.5 Policies**

- 2.5.1 Ensure that policies, codes and regulations, including public development covenants, provide the opportunity to site affordable housing types, in particular off-site manufactured homes and accessory units.
- 2.5.2 Enhance provision of affordable housing for persons with incomes less than 30 percent of the median family income by using available federal and state programs and by promoting private/public partnerships which focus on this affordability range.
- 2.5.3 Enhance provision of affordable housing through the development of at least one, and preferably more than one, private/not for profit/government partnership with the purpose of creating housing priced for persons with incomes between 30 and 90 percent of the median family income.

**GOAL:** *Establish a secure funding mechanism to support development of affordable housing. Coordinate and concentrate public expenditures to make positive and visible impacts on targeted neighborhoods.*

## **2.6 Policies**

- 2.6.1 Assess the impacts of fee waivers, exemptions and other deductions or exclusions on the housing needs continuum.
- 2.6.2 Target the work of housing partnerships (private, not for profit or profit) to various income levels, to encourage rental and home ownership opportunities.

- 2.6.3 Encourage and stimulate financing for affordable housing including innovative, single room occupancy.

**GOAL:**        ***Support diversity in the mix of housing types in the community, while improving home ownership tenure.***

## **2.7 Policies**

- 2.7.1 Provide opportunities for new development to occur. There shall be no more than 75 percent of any single product type of housing in any jurisdiction. (e.g., single-family detached residential.)

Strategies to achieve these opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Minimum density for single family. These should average: eight dwelling units per acre within the Vancouver urban growth area, six units per acre with the Battle Ground, Camas, Ridgefield, and Washougal urban growth area, and four units per acre within the La Center urban growth area.
- Minimum density for multi-family.
- Provisions for Accessory Dwelling Units.
- Provision for duplexes in single family.
- Provisions for townhouses/rowhouses.
- Allowance of manufactured home parks.
- Provision for diversified housing types allowed as part of a Planned Unit Development.
- Recognition of the flexibility allowed in housing types as part of a Mixed Use Development (e.g., example: living units above commercial areas).
- Recognition of Assisted Living Units as a housing type.

- 2.7.2 Consider the dislocation impacts of programs that promote conversion of units from rentals to owner occupied.

## STRATEGIES

The following strategies are proposed as a means to achieve the goals and policies of the Housing Element. These are a range of strategies that the county is considering and some of these strategies may be implemented over time.

- Develop a program to assist municipalities in accommodating diverse households.
- Maintain a tenant/landlord handbook to focus on tenant/landlord rights and responsibilities as well as fair housing legislation.
- Provide targeted information regarding fair housing such as booths at public events, web site and a more active role in support of fair housing regulations.
- Work with financial institutions, not for profits and the public sector to create mechanisms such as reverse mortgage programs, loan pools, housing trust funds, local funding and other tools to finance rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing.
- The county supports the extension of contracts for federally subsidized affordable housing that are up for renewal.
- The county supports the purchase of expired federally subsidized affordable housing by non-profits or the Vancouver Housing Authority in order to preserve the affordability of the housing.
- Maintain an outreach/education program to explain all aspects of home ownership and tenancy including maintenance, repair, landscaping, credit, prevention of discrimination and predatory lending.
- Continue to enhance partnerships between public and private sector interests to work with Home Investment Partnership, state agencies, financial institutions, builders, etc., to develop housing appropriate for all groups along the housing continuum.
- Promote affordable housing demonstration projects at a variety of densities and incorporating a variety of housing types in order to illustrate what can be accomplished using local builders, financing, etc.
- Promote employer sponsored homeowner programs.
- Provide information to the lending community regarding the planning process and its impact on the development process.
- Encourage the use of low income tax credits and bond financing for equity in construction financing.
- Encourage the development of custom lending targeted for difficult to finance projects.
- Develop finance mechanisms to preserve and rehabilitate small apartment complexes (8-20 units).
- Enhance the local (nonfederal) renewable housing fund, such as 2060, for people with low incomes and special needs. Resources for the fund might be the result of bond issues, mileage, existing revenue or reallocation of the real estate excise tax (REET).
- Promote the facilitation of low-income housing projects through the use of the Development Coordinator. Provide guidance for these projects on process, available options and compliance with state and local codes.
- Develop a voluntary inclusionary zoning program.

